481 - Why Tawaf Is Done Counterclockwise

the question

would like to know the significance and purpose of walking around the Ka`bah. Why is it to be kept to the left? Is the walking only done at Mecca or is it done on a daily basis as well?
Any information you could give me would be greatly appreciated.

Summary of answer

The basic reason why tawaf is done counterclockwise is to follow the suit of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Following the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has been ordained in the Quran and the Sunnah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The basic reason for keeping the Ka`bah on one's left when performing tawaf (circumambulation) is to follow the suit of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Following the Prophet has been ordained in the Quran (interpretation of the meaning):

"Obey the Prophet so that you may be blessed with mercy" and "Say (O Muhammad): if you really love Allah, then follow my suit and Allah will love you and grant you forgiveness of your sins".

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), furthermore, has said regarding the rituals of Hajj and `Umrah, "Follow my suit in performing your rituals". (See An-Nasai as reported by Jabir. Also, Sahih al-Jami`, hadith No. 7882)

This should suffice as the reason for a Muslim to perform tawaf around the Ka`bah in the way it is done, and we do not need other reasons that attempt to tie this act to the movement of galaxies and stars or the revolving of planets, etc.

Muslims by nature must believe, submit to and act according to what was validly and duly recorded as the behavior or statements of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

If on top of this a reason or some relevant wisdom comes to be known, then so be it, thanks to Allah. Otherwise, a Muslim submits to the order of Allah and His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and will accordingly be recompensed for his compliance and deeds.

Finally, we must note that circumambulation is an act specified only for the Ka`bah as part of the worship and is not to be done in other places or situations as such.

Allah is the Most Knowledgeable and knows best.